

# Corsham to Box Peacock Trail



The walk follows Public Rights of Ways (PRoW). It is a moderate walk, on footpaths and lanes with some short, steep gradients or rough terrain and some stiles to climb over. Suitable footwear is required, as there are occasionally muddy footpaths to navigate through woodland, fields and alongside the By Brook.

The walk starts at the Springfield Community Campus on Beechfield Road, SN13 9DN. There is a public car park to the rear of the Campus and the nearest bus stops are at Newlands Road, SN13 0BH and Valley Road SN13 9DT.


The walk is 9 miles long and has a total ascent of 804 feet.


## Introduction


This circular walk seeks to explore the area to the west and north of Corsham and offers magnificent views of Box Valley and the By Brook in the Cotswold AONB. The trail visits Pockeredge Drive and Lakes, then out to Westwells and past the Wadswick Green Retirement Village, once the site of the Royal Naval Training Establishment HMS Royal Arthur, then west to Chapel Plaister and past Hazelbury Manor, on to Box Hill Common with fine views over to Box Middle Tunnel and Bannerdown on the horizon.

Dropping down into Box, the trail then follows the By Brook as far as Drewett's Mill, before winding its way up to the site of the former RAF Rudloe Manor Headquarters and then back into Corsham.

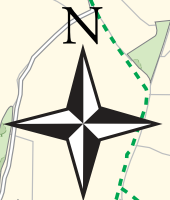
**Follow and click the numbers on the map for info and directions**

Start - Springfield Community Campus 

Viewpoint 

Public footpaths 

For more detail see OS Explorer 156



Click the numbers for info and directions

## 1 Springfield Community Campus

Originally, the Community Centre was built in 1943 as a canteen and cinema serving the migrant community of munitions workers that were living around the area during the war. Replaced by the Campus, built and run by Wiltshire Council and opened in 2014 as one convenient centralised location for local residents at reduce running costs. It is now home to Corsham's library, neighbourhood police station, sports facilities including a gym, climbing wall and refurbished swimming pool, cafe, meeting rooms, exhibition space, play area and an all-weather sports pitch.

- ▶ *Turn left out of the Springfield Campus and follow the path to the rear of the complex, alongside the sports pitch, outdoor gym, and skate park to reach Valley Road. Cross the road here and continue left down Valley Road until reaching the Potley Lane Bridge.*



## 2 Potley Lane Bridge

The photo shows the Class Castle Loco 7032 with Potley Bridge in the background. The bridge is a Grade II Listed Building. It was erected c1836-41 across a rock-faced cutting as part of the Great Western Railway authorised by an Act of Parliament in 1835 to construct a line from London to Bristol.

The bridge was partially refaced in engineering brick. In the last few decades, the inside of the parapets have been raised with aluminium safety panels. The Box Tunnel East Portal is visible from the bridge, to the west.

- ▶ *Retrace your steps back from the bridge and take the first left and go through the avenue of trees along Pockeredge Drive.*



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### 3 Pockeredge Drive & Lakes

Once the entrance to Pockeredge House, and also to Pockeredge Farm home of Henry de 'Poltrigge' in 1327. In the 1839 Tithe map Pockeredge House is shown as Puckeridge House then owned by Abraham Lloyd Edridge. It was converted to an Officer's Mess during the Second World War and used as such until 2010 when a new purpose-built combined mess was built nearby.

Halfway along Pockeredge Drive, on the right, are two man-made Pockeredge (upper and lower) lakes, a sanctuary for wildlife and fish. Chippenham Angling Club controls the fishing rights on the two small Pockeredge Lakes which contain Carp, Tench, Perch and healthy stocks of Roach and Rudd.

▶ *Continue through the metal gate at the end of Pockeredge Drive and turn left along the lane with MOD Corsham on your right and the reservoir on the left.*

### 4 MOD Corsham & Reservoir

The War Office bought a section of the Pockeredge estate to provide space for the Basil Hill Barracks to be built here in 1936. The barracks were used by 15 Company Royal Army Ordnance Corps as the administrative headquarters for a Central Ammunitions Depot known as CAD Corsham. The depot closed in 1964.

Today, the site contains the Information Systems & Services organisation, part of the MoD's Defence Equipment and Support organisation.

The reservoir overlooked at the rear by Pockeredge House was once an ornamental lake. It was drained prior to WWII and lined with concrete and used to supply emergency fire-fighting water for the entire depot.

▶ *Continue along the lane until reaching the gates at the rear of MoD Corsham, turn left along Spring Lane and after 50m take the footpath on the right up the steps. Follow the path up through the woods and across the fields to emerge at Westwells.*



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## 5 Westwells and Quarry

Known as Westwelle in 1276. The 1816 Corsham Tithe Map shows the Westwells area to be called 'Westrells'. Elle = source of natural spring water to the west of Corsham. Possibly once the home of Walter de Westwell. Cromwell billeted his militia in the barracks there during the time that he resided in nearby Jaggards House.

Moor Park Quarry alongside the lower Westwells road, was opened in 1890 by Messrs Sheppard & Sons. It was prone to flooding and used as a testing ground for new innovations such as in 1948, when Samson coal cutters were used to extract the stone. It closed in 1952, the shaft was sealed and a modern housing estate now occupies the quarry yard.

▶ *Turn right and follow the road to the T junction of Westwells Road. Keep heading towards Neston and after 50 yards turn right on the lane alongside the old stone cottages. Follow the lane and turn right onto the footpath to the right of a metal gate to emerge on to the lane that leads to Wadswick Green Retirement Village entrance.*



## 6 HMS Royal Arthur / Wadswick Green

In the autumn of 1946, Prince Philip moved to HMS Royal Arthur as an instructor between September 1946 and December 1947. Whilst here, he became engaged to Princess (now Queen) Elizabeth. HMS Royal Arthur was redeveloped recently and is now Wadswick Green (part of Rangeford Holdings), a modern retirement village.

▶ *Cross the lane and go through the kissing gate on your left. Follow the footpath until emerging from the copse into a field adjacent to Roundwood Cottage on your right. Turn diagonally left and head to the right-hand bottom corner of the field to exit through a metal gate to another metal gate.*



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*Keeping the wood on your right follow the footpath to emerge at Wadswick Airstrip. Do not cross the airstrip. Follow the footpath adjacent to the wire fence on your left to emerge on to the drive. Turn left and follow the drive to the front of Wadswick Country Store and Café. Make use here of the toilets and refreshments if required.*

## **7** Wadswick Country Store, Café & Airstrip

The store is a family run business that has been retailing for over 25 years. There is a café here that sells fresh coffee, cakes and lunches.

- ▶ *From the front main entrance of the store, head for the old stone cottages in the far distance, by taking the signed footpath exit at the far left of the car park and keeping to the right of the dry-stone wall for approx. 100m. Cross over the stone stile and continue right through a kissing gate then a gate and across a field to emerge on the lane to the rear of Chapel Plaister. Go to the right of the building to the Bradford-on Avon Road and the front of the Chapel Plaister.*

## **8** Chapel Plaister

John du Plessis (1195-1263) is credited with rebuilding this Plaister wayside hostel c1235 by adding a sanctuary known as Chapel Plaister (later known as 'The Bell Inn' ale house). Once, pilgrims journeying to St. Joseph of Arimathea's shrine at Glastonbury slept here. Also once used as a lookout post for a highwayman named Boulter, alias Baxter.

The Grade I listed chapel is open to the public each year during May-September from 2 pm to 4 pm each Wednesday.

- ▶ *100 yards south towards Bradford-on-Avon on the opposite side of the busy B3109 road, is the entrance to Hazelbury Manor. Carefully cross the busy road here and make your way down the lane to Hazelbury Manor.*



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## 9 Hazelbury Manor and Gardens

The Grade II listed manor house and garden are not open to the public so please stay on the public footpath. Formerly called Hazelbury House, it dates from the C14 when it belonged to the Croke family. It was once owned by the eccentric millionaire couple Barbara and Ian Pollard who came to fame in the UK as 'the naked gardeners' for their habit of working in the garden without any clothes on!

► *Turn left at the front of the Manor House following the footpath past the stable block on the left. Continue across two stiles to emerge on a bridle path with excellent views across the valley and out to Colerne on the horizon.*

*Turn right and follow the footpath to Box Hill Woods. Enter the woods on your left and then follow the path on the righthand edge of the woods adjacent to the fields on your right to exit on Quarry Hill road. Carefully cross the roads to the viewing point adjacent to Box Hill Common and Grove Farm.*

*From here, you can make use of the toilets and refreshments at the Quarryman's Arms some 200 yards along the lane that weaves its way through the common, before returning to the viewing point.*



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## 10 Box Hill Common and The Quarryman's Arms

The Common was owned and sold by the Northey family in 1923, it was later secured in 1978 as a public open space for the enjoyment of the whole parish of Box Hill, when Box Parish Council bought the land from George Lacy of Grove Farm for £3,000.

In the 1830s it was an alehouse belonging to William Jones Brewer, a quarry-master and contractor working for Isambard Kingdom Brunel on the eastern portion of Box Tunnel. From Roman times until 1969, limestone was extracted from beneath this hilltop here.



► *From the viewing point, walk down Quarry Hill road, then right into the field through the wooden kissing gate and continue downhill. Go through a metal kissing gate, on your right slightly uphill is the remains of a half-hidden remains of a WWII pillbox built to defend Box Tunnel. Turn left and go downhill to cross a stile in the fence line on your left into Lacy Woods.*

*Walk straight through the woods and out onto the main A4 road at the specially built viewing platform to the western portal of Box Tunnel.*

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## 11 Lacy Woods & Box Tunnel

The 2000 Millennium Lacy Wood is named after landowner and builder George Lacy of Grove Farm, who gave the land to the parish council.

Building of the almost 2.9 kilometres (1¾ miles) long tunnel commenced in 1836 and was finished on time on the last day of June 1841; celebrated by a day's rejoicing in Box village.

► *After viewing the tunnel portal, carefully cross the busy A4 road and turn left onto the railway bridge.*

*Continue down the A4 London Road. The house on your right with the blue plaque on, was once occupied by the Reverend Wilbert Vere Awdry, author of "Thomas the Tank Engine" stories. Make use of the Birdhouse Cafe for refreshments and toilet.*

*Carefully cross Mill Lane near the Post Office and shop and continue past the terrace houses and turn immediately right onto the footpath which takes you down by Fairmead View Terrace and onto Mill Lane.*

*Turn left at Mill Lane, then under the railway bridge and alongside Box Mill to your right (now the Real World Recording Studios). Turn right just over the small bridge by the telegraph pole and continue along the public footpath beside the By Brook.*



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## 12 Box Mill

In 1864 Box Mill (also known as Pinchin's Mill) was part of the Box Brewery owned by the Pinchins. It has also been used as a corn mill, malthouse, cloth mill, and a flour and grist mill. Box Mill was bought from Spafax in 1987 by musician Peter Gabriel, and converted into the Real World recording studios, a unique residential recording facility, where artists, producers and engineers can escape their daily distractions and focus solely on making music.

► *Keep heading alongside the By Brook over a footbridge, and then left through a gate into open fields.*



## 13 By Brook

Also known as the Bybrook, is some 12 miles (19 km) long. Once home to twenty watermill sites; in Roman times these were exclusively used for grinding corn, but by the end of the 12th Century, the mills were converted for wool fulling and in the 18th, 19th and well into the 20th Century for paper production, albeit that a few mills reverted back to grinding corn.

► *Continue on the public footpath following the course of the By Brook over several fields to its junction with the lane near Saltbox Farm. Turn right down the lane and right again over the By Brook down to Drewetts Mill.*



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## 14 Drewetts Mill

This Grade II\* listed building recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book was given to the Bigods by Humphrey de Bohun in 1120 and was a corn mill mid c18. In the 1871 census, John Browning with his wife, five daughters and three sons ran the mill and it remained in working order as recently as 1990 with the Tucker family.

▶ *Continue past the mill and up the lane, which is steep in places, and take the bridleway on your left to the rear of Mills Platt Farm. Continue along the signed bridleway to emerge at the entrance of Lower Rudloe Farm. The views over the valley to the left towards Colerne are breathtaking. In winter, this section of the walk can become very muddy and rutted.*

*At the junction of bridleway and lane turn left and pass Folly Cottage to a T junction.*

*Turn right at the T junction to reach the top of the hill alongside the A4. The imposing Rudloe Cottage which overlooks Box Valley was once home to Lloyd George's Principal Secretary Albert Sylvester.*



## 15 Rudloe Manor Main Entrance (ex RAF)

Rudloe Manor dates from the beginning of the 13th century. The present Manor House was built in 1685 on an earlier construction. It was bought for £14,000 from the Danish Countess Raben by the Air Ministry in 1941 and named RAF Rudloe Manor. Behind Rudloe Cottage was the main entrance and Gatehouse into RAF Rudloe Manor.

In the 1950s the MoD's UFO project at RAF Rudloe Manor began investigating reports of flying saucers, crop circles, and even abductions by aliens!

The Manor House has been unoccupied for some years and awaits redevelopment.

▶ *Turn back towards Corsham and take the path alongside Rudloe Cottage, the Gatehouse entrance and through the avenue of trees to reach the entrance of Rudloe Firs alongside the A4.*



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## 16 Rudloe Firs

In Rudloe Firs are the 'Rudloe Tanks' Water Treatment Works. Beneath the surface is Brewer's Yard (excavated by William Jones Brewer), a unique stone quarry worked around 1880 at two different levels connected by a stone staircase.

- ▶ *Carefully cross the A4 to take the footpath down the adjacent private road to emerge into the Rudloe Estate.*

## 17 Rudloe Community Centre

The current Rudloe Community Centre, was built to replace the old Rudloe Club at the turn of the century at a cost of £850,000. Today, the residents who wish to regenerate the closed Centre are currently fighting plans to demolish it and replace it with houses/flats on the Green.

- ▶ *Head for the bottom left of the estate by continuing ahead on Prestly Wood Road, left on to Leyland Road past the Community Centre on your right, then take Toghill Crescent on the bend to the left past the bungalows to finally reach the B3109 Bradford-on-Avon Road. Carefully cross the road and take the footpath opposite, keeping the fields on the right and the new housing estate, Park Place, on the left. Carefully cross Park Lane to the footpath and turn left following the Park Lane pavement/cycle way towards Corsham, passing by Allen Road and Peel Circus.*



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## 18 Corsham Ammunition Depot Tunnel Quarry

On your right can be seen two vertical (capped off) Hudswell lift shafts near Allen Road. This was one of the entrance points to the underground WWII Corsham Ammunition Depot's Tunnel Quarry, deep below and known as 'The Tunnel'.

It covered 50 acres and eventually contained approximately 120,000 tons of explosives and cost £4,500,000 to build in 1938. In 1943, the accommodation halls and canteens below were graced with beautiful murals painted by Olga Lehmann (assisted by Gilbert Wood). It closed on 4 December 1962.

## 19 Hartham Park Quarry

On the far side of Park Lane is the Hartham Park working quarry. Stone from here was used to build the nearby beautiful ancient City of Bath.

Hartham Quarry dates back to 1810. The quarry was opened as a museum in 1986 and closed at the end of the 1990s. Today, the Lovell Stone Group's Hartham Park Quarry is the oldest Bath stone quarry still operational today.

▶ *Continue along Park Lane crossing Freestone Way and Masons Way to reach St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church.*

## 20 St Patrick's Church

Constructed as the Pickwick District School in 1858, it was used later as a Glove Factory and then a Gas Mask factory in WWII before becoming St Patrick's Catholic Church in 1945. In the early 1900s across the road at the roundabout, the round Toll House was once known as the 'Pepper Pot' sweet shop kept by a little old lady called Sally Watts.

▶ *Keep walking down to the end of Park Lane to reach the A4 mini-roundabout opposite the roundhouse. Turn right towards the Hare and Hounds public house A4 roundabout. Turn right down into Pickwick Road and then immediately right at the next mini-roundabout into the Valley Road. Cross the road and turn left down Beechfield Road to reach the Springfield Community Campus. The end.*



Olga Lehmann murals



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## The Countryside Code

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any way signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Take only pictures and leave only footprints



## Box Community History

For further information, please see [www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk](http://www.boxpeopleandplaces.co.uk)

## Corsham Historic Past

For further information on Corsham heritage, please visit the Corsham Bookshop and its comprehensive set of books by local author Julian Carosi ('Corsham Revealed' published 2019, 'Corsham Revealed More' 2019, and 'Corsham Revealed Three' available mid 2020).

This leaflet was sponsored and supported by the following, to whom many thanks:

Corsham Town Council  
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Corsham Walking Festival



## Safety Information

Please be aware that you are walking this route at your own risk. At all times you are expected to use your own judgement regarding personal safety before proceeding along any of the routes on the Corsham Box Peacock Trail.

A separate section in this leaflet refers to extracts from the Countryside Code that provides general advice on walking in the countryside.

We hope you have enjoyed your walk back in time through parts of the historic market town of Corsham and Box.

It is advisable to use Ordnance Survey map Explorer No. 156 Chippenham and Bradford-on-Avon (1;25,000) in conjunction with this leaflet.

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### Other Heritage Trails:

- *Box Heritage Trail*
- *Biddestone Heritage Trail*
- *Colerne Heritage Trail*
- *Corsham Heritage Trails*
- *Corsham Peacock Heritage Trails*

Produced by Barry Cox, David Wright and Ian Rooney.  
Please send any comments to Heritage Trails Project c/o  
[chair@corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk](mailto:chair@corshamwalkingfestival.org.uk)

Text and photos by Julian Carosi.

Designed by Bob Child: [www.peartreestudios.co.uk](http://www.peartreestudios.co.uk)